

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NEW KUWAIT FOOD LAW

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SUMMARY: NEW KUWAIT FOOD REGULATION REQUIRED ARABIC LABELING INCLUDING CONTENTS, DATE OF MANUFACTURE AND DATE OF EXPIRATION OF QUALITY OF PRODUCT. AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS OF DISCUSSION GOK OFFICIALS SEEM TO HAVE REALIZED PROBLEMS REGULATION WOULD CAUSE FOOD SUPPLIERS AND HAVE GREATLY RELAXED ORIGINAL REQUIREMENTS. HOWEVER, SPIRIT OF REGULATION IS NOT DEAD AND US FOOD EXPORTERS TO KUWAIT MAY WANT TO CONSIDER POSSIBILITIES OF DUAL LABELLING SYSTEM EMPLOYING ENGLISH AND ARABIC. END SUMMARY.

1. NEW FOOD LAW WAS COOPERATIVE EFFORT ON THE PART OF FOUR SEPARATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, PLUS KUWAIT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, DANISH-KUWAITI DAIRY CO., AND KUWAIT FLOUE MILLS CO. BASICALLY, LAW RESEMBLES US FOOD LAWS AND IS ORIENTED TOWARD CONSUMER PROTECTION. LAW PROHIBITS MISREPRESENTATION OF PRODUCT THROUGH FALSE LABELLING, REQUIRES ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS PLUS PRODUCTION DATE AND DATE OF EXPIRY OF QUALITY OF PRODUCT. DIFFICULTY FOR US AND OTHER EXPORTERS OCCURS IN SECTION 9 WHICH REQUIRES QUOTE. IN THE CASE OF PRODUCTS IMPORTED FROM ANY ARAB OR FOREIGN COUNTRY, THE ARABIC LANGUAGE SHALL BE AMONG THE LANGUAGES USED ON THE PREPACKAGED FOOD SUBSTANCE LABEL AND THE ACCOMPANYING EXPLANATORY STATEMENT.
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END QUOTE.

2. THERE APPEARS TO BE GREAT CONFUSION AMONG OFFICIALS HERE AS TO SERIOUSNESS AND INTENT OF LAW. APPARENTLY, NO ONE HAD GIVEN EFFECTS OF THE NEW REGULATION MUCH CONSIDERATION. AFTER LOCAL BUSINESSMEN EXPLAINED PROBLEMS INVOLVED AND CLAIMED SOME US AND EUROPEAN FIRMS MIGHT EXCLUDE KUWAIT FROM THEIR BUSINESS RATHER THAN INCUR COSTS OF COMPLYING WITH NEW LAW, OFFICIALS HAD CHANGE OF HEART. FOLLOWING IS INTERPRETATION OF PRESENT REQUIREMENTS AS VIEWED BY DIRECTOR OF STANDARDS, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY; A) ENGLISH LABELLING IS SUFFICIENT PROVIDED CONTENTS, DATE OF MANUFACTURE AND DATE OF EXPIRY OF QUALITY OF PRODUCT ARE LISTED. B) FOODSTUFFS, ESPECIALLY FROZEN MEAT PRODUCTS, SHOULD HAVE DATES OF PROCESSING AND DATES OF EXPIRY OF QUALITY AFTER OCTOBER 31, 1975. C) MILK, MILK PRODUCTS AND BABY FOODS SHOULD HAVE THE DATES OF PROCESSING AND DATE OF EXPIRY AFTER MAY 31, 1975.

3. PRESENCE OF TWO FOOD SALES TEAMS IN KUWAIT IN RECENT MONTHS PROVIDED GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR EMBOFFS AND FOOD EXPORTERS TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS WITH LOCAL FOOD IMPORTERS WHO WERE GENERALLY UNAWARE OF THE LAW. LOCAL MERCHANTS IN TURN CARRIED THE IDEAS TO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. CONSEQUENTLY, WE BELIEVE IT BEST THAT ANY US COMPANIES PERCEIVING PROBLEMS WITH FOOD LAWS HERE CONTACT THEIR KUWAITI AGENTS ASAP WITH COPY TO EMBASSY, COMMERCIAL SECTION. POST WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

4. WE NOTE SOME US AND EUROPEAN FOOD COMPANIES HAVE BEGUN USING ARABIC LABELLING AND BELIEVE IT WISE SOME FIRMS MAY WANT TO CONSIDER THIS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LARGE ARAB MARKET. FOOD LAW AS ORIGINALLY STATED WAS CREATED OUT OF GENUINE CONCERN FOR KUWAITI CONSUMER. SEVERAL MIN OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OFFICIALS TOLD EMBOFF THAT PRIMARY COMPLAINTS IN THIS AREA WERE AGAINST EAST ASIAN NATIONS WHOSE FOOD PRODUCTS WERE NOT ACCURATELY REPRESENTED BY EXTERIOR LABELLING ON PACKAGES AND CANS. IT IS LIKELY THE SUBJECT OF ARABIC LABELLING WILL COME UP AGAIN AND THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT ORIGINAL LAW WILL NOT REPEAT NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.

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